claimed it, instead, the Day of the Constitution (of the People's Republic). 796

October 31, Reformation Day, is celebrated by the Protestant population. On All Souls Day, November 2, the population honor [769] the deceased, visiting graves and lighting candles on them.

At Christmas time, nativity plays are performed (cf. Sub-paragraph 11)[1] by the youth of the village (betlehemesek) and gifts [431] are exchanged. The custom of the Christmas tree has begun now to spread out from the cities where it has been most common.

Special family holidays are birthdays, saint's days and, in winter the day of pig slaughtering.

The daily routine of the Magyar peasants is quite simple: 512 during the months of increased actitity, i.e. from May to October, they get up early, about 4:00 A.M. and feed the cattle and domestic animals before having breakfast themselves. At 6:00 or 7:00 A.M. they go out to the fields where they work until noon and then eat the lunch which they carry with them. Except in Transdanubia, women [462] also go out to the fields so that the villages of the Great Plains look deserted in daytime during the season. Shortly before sunset, the peasants return home to feed the animals and have their dinner.

1 [See cat. 116, pp. 106-107 -- Analyst]

512 They turn in to sleep around 10:00 or 11:00 at night. Outside the season, the wake-up time is around 6:00 o'clock in the morning and bed-time is earlier: 7:00-8:00 P....

527 The holiday routine offers more relaxation and diversity. Some work around the house is done in the morning, after which the peasants don their best costumes and go to church. The divine services generally begin at 10:00 A.M. After church the men group on the streets and "talk politics" while the women rush home to prepare lunch. The afternoon begins with a siesta for a couple of hours, and then come some social activities: people visit each other, the men go to the tavern, and the women sit on their porches or in front of their houses. Girls walk along the streets in groups, often arm-in-arm, while young men stand around in groups and watch them. Later in the evening they may dance.

461 The attitude of the Magyar peasants toward work is in general a positive one. Their existence and activity are strictly regulated by the seasonal changes, which do not permit vacations or holidays except those set aside by tradition and religion. Their living standards, low as they are today, do not permit relaxation even in the winter months, for they have to create the commodities they use in their

666 plentiful. This is not our *puszta*. We mean quite a different
423 thing by it. There are the huge estates in the country of our lords. In the centre is the big manor-house with the great park. Behind the park are the houses of the overseers, then the big, beautiful stables and pigsties. Then come our huts—one-room huts, where generally two families live. Occasionally, when a pigsty is too old to be used, then we may get it, so that sometimes every family has a room of its own. This is good, for it is very difficult for more than ten people to live in the same hut. The women-folk quarrel. There are difficulties.

361 Well, anyhow, the complex of our huts, behind the park of the lord in the centre of the huge estate, is the *puszta*—our *puszta*. It is very far away from the villages where the free people live in well-ordered rows of houses. These villages are splendid and interesting places; they have shops, and people can even buy
ooo matches if they have the money. We borrow our fires from the upper-class people—let's say from the honourable wife of the estate-smith, if she is in a good mood.

We are not interesting people, we servants of the *puszta*. We
[423] do not know our number. But, as half the country of our lords belongs to big estates, you can imagine that we are many.

Sometimes we see picture books which one of the bright *puszta*-lads gets from the manor. There are books about the savages of Africa. There are no books about us.

Perhaps you will not mind if, before going on with our story, we tell you how we live now. We are so eager to talk, you know, if we think that someone may care to listen. Of course we complain. This is our fault. Serfs do complain if they are listened to. But perhaps it is worth your while to listen. Our life is quite as "quaint" and "different" as that of the New Guinea people.

•512 Generally we get up at three o'clock in the morning. This is good, for at harvest-time we have to start work an hour earlier. There is, of course, always a great deal of work on the *puszta*. There are lots of animals: cows, oxen, horses, sheep, pigs, chickens. The stables and pigsties have to be cleaned, the big carts filled with manure, the cows fed and milked. Then,
[262] about half-past five in the morning, we can have our breakfast. In good times we have some warm soup—"lebbencs" soup. This is delicious. For a family of five you take an onion and a spoonful of pork-fat and cook it and throw in it little pieces of wheat-flakes. In every plate you get three, or even four, pieces of these flakes. But lebbencs-soup is quite exceptional. Generally we eat a chunk of bread, as big as our fist.

Then we start the real work in the fields. About eleven the women-folk take their baskets, cover them with a kerchief, put the baskets on their heads, and proceed to the field. They take lunch to the men-folk. The baskets are big. They are covered because our women-folk are proud. The baskets under the kerchief generally contain a soup-bowl, but more often than not this bowl is empty. Nevertheless, the women bring them out, and the men have their chunks of bread in their left hand and, squatting on their hams, they spoon with their right hand the soup which is not there. We are foolish people. We are ashamed in front of each other. We are ashamed at not having any soup. For many centuries we have pretended to eat the imaginary soup, and still we have not given up the pretence. Proudly the women carry the baskets out to the fields in a solemn procession, balancing them beautifully on their heads. And the baskets contain a chunk of bread, an empty bowl, the spoon-for-pretence, and sometimes an onion, a green paprika, or a gherkin. 512

And you can often see the men, after they have eaten the non-existent soup, wipe their lips and moustaches with the back of their hands, and even emit a satisfied grunt.

The procession of women arrives at the fields about noon. The wives squat beside their men and watch them eat. They eat even less. There is half an hour for lunch and rest, and then work starts again.

The work is heavy. We are not. If we get a chance to complain to the overseers who urge us to work, who are never satisfied with us, we say:

"How can we work faster, how can we do more, when there is so little weight on us?"

Because, to tell you the truth, we are always hungry. Our ambition would be to put on more weight if possible, to be fat like the overseers or the estate management staff.

You have never tried to work for hours and hours in the scorching sun with the heavy Hungarian scythe and falx, cutting the rough stalks of maize and wheat. 243 512

We do this some nine or ten hours a day. The men are in a line and have to move very fast because the overseers and foremen are watching and our women and girls come behind us to gather up what we cut down. Our arms, our whole body, move in great sweeps, like those of the golfers in the parks of our lords when they want to hit that tiny white ball. This sweeping movement—with more power behind it—we have to make many thousand times a day. The women-folk have to stoop, gather, bind—stoop, gather, bind, again and again, for many hours.

000 Our backs ache. Our whole body aches. By the afternoon we are all a bit dizzy. This is the reason why we should like to put on some more weight.

And naturally we are constantly hungry. Our muscles hurt, the sweat runs down in rivulets and carves little sun-scorched ravines on the back of our necks.

Of course most of us are not aware that the aching of our bodies and the emptiness of our bellies is something peculiar. We have been used to this for thousands of years. We only start thinking about it now that we talk about it, you understand.

•512 Well, our days are not very interesting. From dawn till dusk we work in the fields.

Then we go home, to tend the cattle, to clean and feed, to store away and to prepare. Our work is less in winter. Then the animals have to be fed only twice a day; in summer three times.

This work in the stables generally begins at seven in the evening; in winter sometimes earlier. Then the estate management allots the work for the next day. We wait for our orders, and when we have got them we go slowly back to our huts behind the stables.

[461] We are slow. We are tired and ill. We generally work, as you have seen, from two or three in the morning till nine or ten at night. According to the laws now regulating our lives, we have no holidays. If you work about eighteen hours a day, seven days a week; if you work always, year in, year out—well, then you become like us: slow and tired.

The work of the *csiras*—those who tend the cows—is the hardest. Generally, after four years, hard work, and the heavy manure-atmosphere of the stables, destroy the lungs of the *csiras*. If a *csiras* is lucky, he gets away before he starts to spit blood. But many stay, become wrecks, and go to the villages to live by begging.

627 Our lords, the estate-managers and their assistants, when they curse us, say that we are like animals. They treat us as such. According to a new law we are not supposed to be given corporal punishment above the age of eighteen. According to the law, the estate servants between twelve and eighteen may be hit, but in such a way "as not to cause a wound which does not heal within eight days". We have the right to go to the village doctor and get a document stating that we have received a wound which will not heal in eight days. But the village is far away, and we are not permitted to leave the estate—save, on some estates, on every second Sunday, when we have the morning off for church. So this law about a wound caused by corporal punishment does not help us much.

And of course we are often hit and kicked, even if we are over eighteen. Men over thirty-five are generally not hit in the face —they just get an occasional hit with the whip. In some districts it is considered a very grave thing to be struck with a whip or stick. In those districts we don't mind the kicks and hits in the face, which belong to the daily routine, but we do not permit ourselves to be whipped.

To you it probably seems very extraordinary, this being hit. To us it is not. We are hit by our parents, at school, in the army, of course, where the sergeants kick our behinds; the gendarmes hit us in the face if there is trouble with us and the estate-management staff always hit us.

The *csiras*, for instance, who mostly sleep in the stables beside the cows, are awakened by a kick. True, they would not move without being kicked. They don't think this extraordinary. They are used to handling the cattle, and the cattle have to be prodded by kicks and hits.

Well, when the day's work is over—when our lords have told the gardeners, shepherds, field-labourers, cart-drivers what to do next day, they, of course, standing at attention—then we are free till next dawn.

Then we clean ourselves. At dawn we don't bother. Would you? Would you if you knew that, immediately after, you will have to work with the cattle, with manure, in the fields, in the dust? Anyhow, we clean ourselves and prepare for our dinner, when we always eat something warm, not only pretend to do so.

We eat some soup. The soup is generally made by throwing a few pieces of potatoes into boiling water. A few onions and a little lard make a delicious soup. In harder times the soup is naturally thinner. Not everybody likes our soups. Once a lady visited us from the manor and tasted the soup. She spat it out, and said it tasted like dish-water. We like it. Sometimes we can eat our favourite dish, which is made of a mixture of wheat and potatoes, with a little yeast, and boiled in water. We very rarely eat meat. At weddings and funerals we manage to eat meat, because it would be a great shame to get married or die without a feast of meat and wine.

Then—after dinner—we live our private lives. We sit in front of our huts and talk. In the winter we sit inside. Sometimes we gather in one of the huts to read. We know how to read and write. We go to schools, which are very far away. The children walk in most cases ten miles to and from the schools every day. But they like to do it. And we like to read. We don't read newspapers, for we have not got the money. But we read books,